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AGRO-INPUTS PROJECT

Annual Implementation Plan

Year 4: September 17, 2015 - September 16, 2016



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USAID/Bangladesh
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Acronyms

ACBD	AIRN Capacity Building Director
ACME	Accelerating Capacity for Monitoring and Evaluation
AESA	Agricultural Extension Support Activity Project
AF	Ashroy Foundation
AIN	Aquaculture for Incomes and Nutrition Project
AIP	USAID Agro-Inputs Project in Bangladesh
AIQCPA	Agro-Input Quality Control & Policy Advisor
AIRN	Agro-Inputs Retailers Network
AIS	Agricultural Information Service (DAE)
ASCA	AIRN Supply Chain Advisor
AVAS	Association of Voluntary Actions for Society
AVC	Agricultural Value Chains Project
BADC	Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council
BARI	Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute
BCPA	Bangladesh Crop Protection Association
BFA	Bangladesh Fertilizer Association
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BS	Banchte Shekha
BSA	Bangladesh Seed Association
CA	Cooperative Agreement
CBSG	Capacity Building Service Group
CD	Communications Director
CE	Continuing Education
CPP	Crop Protection Product
CREL	Climate-Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods Project
CS	Communications Specialist
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
DAM	Department of Agricultural Marketing
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
ECA	Ecologically Critical Area
EMMP	Environmental Monitoring and Mitigation Plan
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ES	Environmental Specialist
ESRI	Environmental Systems Research Institute
FFD	Farmer Field Days
FTF	Feed the Future
FO	Field Officer
GIS	Geographic Information System
GISS	Geographic Information System Specialist
GLC	Gender Lens Committee
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GM	Grants Manager
GO	Grants Officer
GS	Gender Specialist
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISTA	International Seed Testing Association
ITCS	IT and Communications Specialist
LOP	Life of Project

M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIS	Market Information System
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPOB	Monthly Price Outlook Bulletin
OCA	Organizational Capacity Assessment
OCD	Organizational Capacity Development
PERSUAP	Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safer Use Action Plan
PNGO	Partner NGO
PSE	Personal Safety Equipment
SHC	Seed Health Committee
SMS	Short Message Services
SSA	Spatial Systems Associates
STA	Senior Training Advisor
TEC	Technical Evaluation Committee
TCS	Technical Communications Specialist
TOT	Training of Trainers
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WEAI	Women Empowerment and Agriculture Index
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

In program year 3, the Agro-Inputs Project (AIP) underwent a joint exercise with USAID to modify its program activities. The revised program description places enhanced emphasis on 1) a wide scale communications campaign to enhance knowledge of quality inputs as well as 2) establishing the Agro Inputs Retailers Network (AIRN) as a one-of-a-kind training and advisory service provider tailored to the needs of the agricultural input retailer. This implementation plan follows the outline structure of the modified program description.

AIP includes four main program interventions. Under Intervention 1, AIP is building AIRN's capability to become a self-sustaining technical training and advisory service provider. AIP will target 3,000 member retailers to receive AIRN certification, retention of which will require satisfactory participation in continuous education (CE). From these retailers, AIP will further train a subset to become "champions" (former *Astha*) who themselves may serve as mentors or trainers. In year 4, more than 2,500 will become Accredited members.

AIP recognizes the importance of promoting gender integration into all activities, particularly given women's leading role as decision makers in household economies and nutrition. AIP is specifically targeting existing and potential female entrepreneurs for the creation of new women-run retail shops, utilizing a matching grants fund to support female-owned start-ups. In year 4, AIP will create or support 284 woman-run retail shops (for a total of 300 over the life of project (LOP)), through a combination of technical assistance and grant funding. AIP will integrate these women retailers into AIRN through training and advisory activities.

Through AIP's Intervention 2, AIP is enhancing the existing input market information through the creation and distribution of an Agro-Inputs Monthly Price Outlook Bulletin (MPOB). Wholesalers provide price data collection points and AIRN member retailers will continue to utilize bulletins to make sound purchasing decisions. The quality of information will be underpinned by an innovative geographical information system (GIS), which will allow for visualization of input distribution networks, transportation infrastructure, client concentrations, cropping patterns, product and price trends, and other information. Maps, input supply information and other agribusiness data will be available to AIRN members, input supply associations, companies, donor-assisted organizations, and the general public. Also through this intervention, AIP and AIRN will promote an agricultural exhibition in late 2015, with the participation of at least 100 Bangladeshi and international supply companies. Through AIRN member retailers, AIP will support approximately 200 demonstrations and field days (one per demo) to illustrate the benefits and proper use of quality inputs. Finally, AIP will complete a print (and potentially electronic) directory of supply companies and wholesalers for its certified AIRN retailers to assist them in sourcing quality inputs.

AIP's Intervention 3 aims to increase the knowledge of quality inputs, including promotion of recognized industry standards for packaging, labeling and conformity with national registries of approved seeds and agro-chemicals. AIP is working with existing national associations and AIRN to define industry-recognized business practices and quality standards. A part of AIRN training to member retailers includes education on these standards, adherence to which will be required for AIRN certification. In addition, largely through Intervention 3, AIP will ensure improved, widespread knowledge of quality inputs through a dedicated communications awareness campaign in the intervention area. This multi-media campaign will communicate information on quality inputs to the agricultural community in the FTF zone through billboards, SMS, TV public service announcements, posters and other media.

Through Intervention 4, AIP will strengthen three existing national input associations, focused on seeds (Bangladesh Seed Association (BSA)), fertilizer (Bangladesh Fertilizer Association (BFA)) and crop protection (Bangladesh Crop Protection Association (BCPA)), whose memberships are mainly wholesale distributors and input supply companies. This will include technical assistance to improve financial management, accounting systems, personnel policies, reporting capabilities, auditing practices, business plan writing, and member services. After building the organizational capacity of its three main industry association partners, AIP anticipates that these entities will continue their learning process through the implementation of AIP-related activities via sub-awards or fixed obligation grants.

Intervention 1: Establish an Agro-Input Retailers Network

Task 1.1 Develop AIRN as a High Quality Technical Training and Advisory Services Center

1.1.1 Create Modules and Train Master Trainers to Conduct Quality Training

With only two years remaining, AIP will embark on an ambitious campaign to reach its goal of 3,000 AIRN members by Y5Q1 (December 2016). Currently, AIRN has approximately 1,000 Accredited retailer members (see Table 4), leaving roughly 2,000 retailers to be trained by the end of project, as training is a pre-requisite to accreditation. In Y4, AIP will target retailers previously trained by private company partners who have not yet joined AIRN via a special membership drive (see Task 1.3) to reduce the remaining number of retailers to be trained, assuming 50% of trained retailers seek membership.

Based on the target and experience gathered in the last few years through working closely with the private sector, AIP will use the following strategies to train retailers in Y4:

Partnership approach: AIP's partner GMark Consulting Limited (GMark) will conduct 3 day basic trainings on agribusiness and ethics, nutrition awareness, agronomic practices, safe and judicious use of pesticides to AIRN retailers. Presently, GMark is conducting AIRN retailer training with their existing pool of master trainers. The master trainers are industry experts with solid technical and business management backgrounds. Female master trainers from AIP's Gender Lens Committee (GLC) were also selected and trained. AIP staff has ensured quality control of these training programs, and the feedback on GMark-led trainings has been very positive. While AIP has worked with private companies on joint, cost-shared trainings to date, the process has been more difficult to manage as private companies have their own agenda and demands, and provide training mostly through their sales force. Therefore, training provision focus will be shifted to GMark in Y4.

Although the timeframe to complete the training is approximately 15 months, the training will effectively be completed in 8 months due to foreseen mitigating factors (i.e. potential political unrest, Ramadan/Eid, other holidays, peak sales season). In order to achieve this target, the GMark team will be divided into two groups to conduct training at the same time. In Y4, 900 retailers will be trained by Gmark (see Table 1).

Table 1: GMark-supported retailer training projection

Timeframe	Monthly Target (ave.)	Total Trained Retailers/Month	Total Target (Participants)
Year 4	25 participants x 6 batches	150	150 x 6 months = 900

Should AIRN decide to offer this training for a fee to other development projects (see Task 1.2.3), which is highly likely, GMark will be the biggest competitor and in an advantageous position due to its resource pool and experience providing training under AIP for more than a year. In order to avoid such conflict beyond LOP, a partnership strategy will be proposed between AIRN and GMark so that they continue to work together beyond LOP.

Direct delivery approach: AIRN Program Officers (POs) will conduct 3 day basic trainings on agribusiness and ethics, nutrition awareness, agronomic practices, safe and judicious use of pesticides to AIRN retailers. AIP/AIRN will conduct direct delivery training by selecting 5-6

existing POs (including 2 female) to develop a trainers' pool. This team will be trained by the Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU). Once trained, they will conduct 3 day basic trainings for the retailers. In order to achieve this target, AIP/AIRN may recruit a training specialist based in Khulna to coordinate all field based training, conduct the technical sessions, document and prepare reports, build professional relations with the agricultural department, such as the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), BADC, and the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), and invite DAE personnel to the training as a resource person. In Y4, 300 retailers will be trained through this approach (see Table 2).

Table 2: AIRN direct delivery retailers' training projection

Timeframe	Monthly Target (ave.)	Total Trained Retailers/Month	Total Target (Participants)
Year 4	25 participants x 2 batches	50	50 x 6 months = 300

Training with private companies: Training with private companies has had mixed reviews to date. Company representatives are understandably focused on their sales and can be a challenge to work with. While the GMark-led training is attended only by AIRN Associate members, private company-led trainings train company retailers who may or may not have a Government of Bangladesh (GoB) license, and may or may not want to become AIRN members. This is of concern to AIP as more than 800 retailers have been trained by company representatives but have not joined AIRN. Nevertheless, since solid partnerships have been formed in the last few years, and working with the private sector promises sustainable business linkages after the life of project (as well as an overall increase in technical knowledge), AIP will continue with this joint training, to train more than 800 additional retailers. Currently, contents of AIP's basic training module are incorporated when company representatives deliver the training. AIP's Y4 joint, cost-shared training with input companies will assume the following form:

1: Three day basic training on agribusiness and ethics, agronomic practices, safe and judicious use of pesticides conducted by AIP certified master trainers of Syngenta Bangladesh Limited and Bayer Crop Science Limited: Syngenta Bangladesh Limited and Bayer Crop Science Limited have completed the training outlined in earlier MOUs. Bayer has verbally expressed interest in additional trainings, however, depending on future discussions, AIP may or may not go into further training through Bayer. Additionally, Syngenta has shown interest in incorporating new, innovative training content for pesticide sprayer men, doctors responding to poisoning, and retailers safe use training.

2: Two day basic training on agribusiness and ethics, agronomic practices, safe and judicious use of pesticides conducted by AIP certified master trainers of Lal Teer Seed Limited: Lal Teer Seed Limited completed only 12 of 40 trainings per its MOU. Due to internal management problems, their key master trainers left the company. In addition, many retailers of this company have yet to obtain GoB licenses. Depending on the ability to work with licensed retailers, AIP may revise its partnership terms with Lal Teer to ensure that at least 50% of retailers being trained are licensed.

3: Three day basic training on agribusiness and ethics, nutrition awareness, agronomic practices, safe and judicious use of pesticides conducted by AIP certified master trainers of Global Agrovet Limited and ACI Limited: Global Agrovet Limited has completed 6 batches of retailers' training and the remaining 4 batches will be completed by December 2015. ACI Limited finished only two batches and will continue with 18 more batches in Y4. AIP will approach ACI to ensure that at least 50% of future trainees are AIRN Associate retailers who will then become Accredited members upon training completion.

4: Three day basic training on agribusiness and ethics, nutrition awareness, agronomic practices, safe and judicious use of pesticides conducted by AIP certified master trainers of Getco: Getco is a new company partner as of July, 2015. AIP has confirmed with Getco that at least 50% of future trainees are AIRN Associate members who will then become Accredited members upon training completion.

In order to verify quality of the training, AIP will ensure that:

- Respective POs are present in companies' training, carry out membership drives at the beginning of the training, and oversee the training management;
- Respective POs are present in GMark training to observe overall training management;
- Respective POs make follow up visits to individual retailers' shops on a monthly basis to address needs related to training and garner feedback;
- The existing training modules given as handouts will be printed as per the USAID printing guidelines;
- Three separate topics from existing materials: i. agri-business and ethics, ii. nutrition awareness and, iii. pest and disease management will be developed and printed as a technical handbook per USAID printing guidelines.

Continuous education and advanced training: Besides fulfilling the target of basic training, AIP will also develop curriculum for CE and advanced training during Y4. One or two training programs will be developed and delivered to AIRN Accredited members (such as the joint aquaculture inputs training by AIP and the Aquaculture for Incomes and Nutrition Project (AIN)). In Y4, however, the priority will be given to basic training. Once the target is achieved by Y5Q1, the remaining period will be utilized to deliver advanced training.

1.1.2 Illustrate Best Practices via Domestic and International Study Tours

Per the revised program description, the project has a target of 10 domestic and 3 international study tours, of which 6 domestic and 2 international tours have already been conducted. 3 domestic (with 40 AIRN participants) and 1 international study tours (with 10 AIRN participants) are planned for Y4. While the tours have to date been free of charge for the selected retailers, AIP would like to accept contributions from the retailers to ensure their ownership. A culture of cost-sharing needs to be established with the retailers if AIRN expects to generate revenue from the services it will provide beyond LOP, and training and tours are expected to generate funds for AIRN in the future. All contributions collected would be transferred to AIRN for utilization beyond LOP.

Task 1.2 Develop Governance, Membership Structure, and Training and Services Strategy for AIRN

1.2.1 Identify Flexible Governance

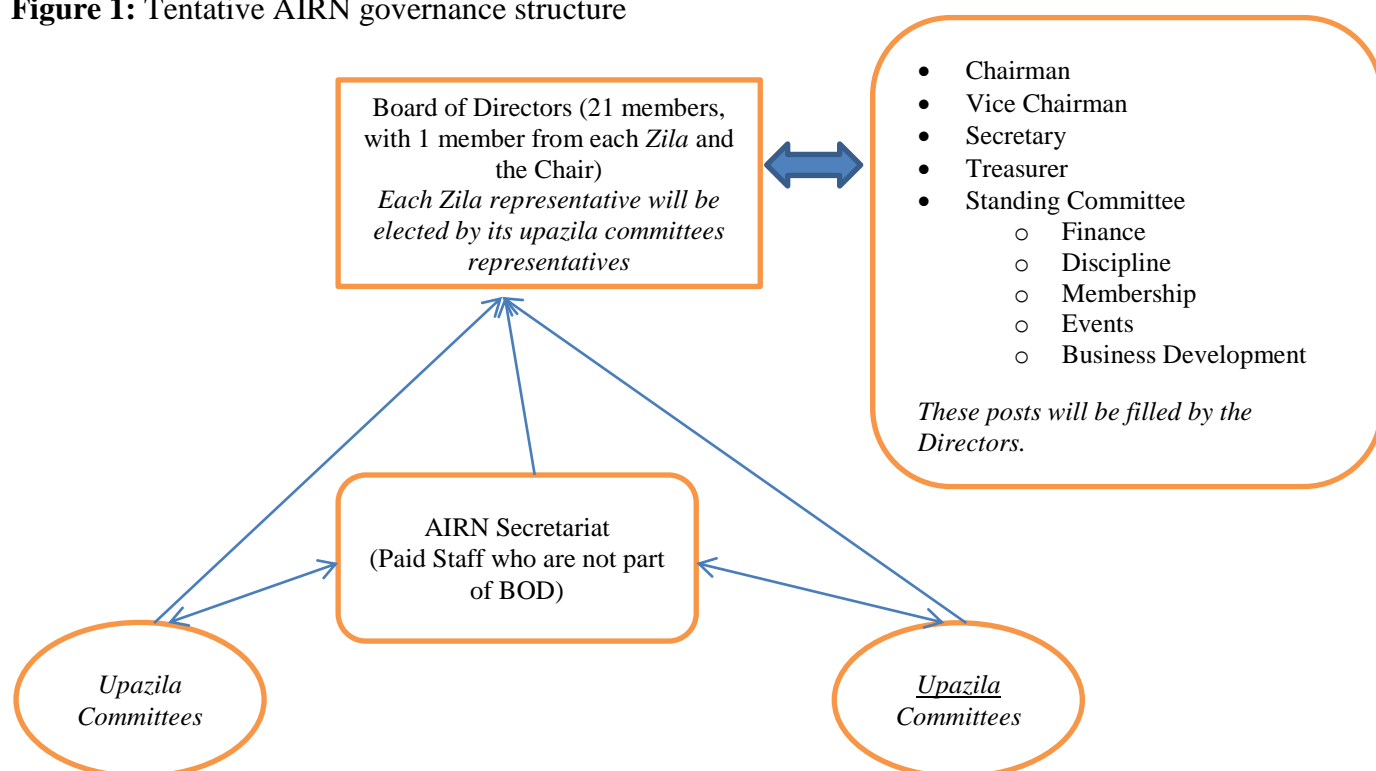
AIRN is expected to start-up in Y4Q2. For the entire Y4, and possibly Y5, AIRN will be staffed by AIP personnel (who may transition to AIRN full time after the life of project), with the AIRN Coordinator filling the role of the Managing Director. A balance has been brought between what the Advisory Board seeks for AIRN and what is realistically possible in the first few years, and based on their input, the AIRN/AIP team has devised the following potential staffing plan (see Table 3).

Table 3: Proposed first year staffing of AIRN (beyond LOP)

Proposed AIRN Staff Positions	Number of Staff	Salary (BDT)	Primary Responsibility	Currently Filled by Project Staff
Managing Director (also covering business development)	1	1,320,000	Overall, also to cover business development	AIRN Coordinator
Finance and Admin Manager	1	600,000	Core finance + Service 1 (credit/cash linkage or facility) and Service 5 (registration and renewal), to cover procurement (Service 3 (group purchasing))	AIP Finance and Administration Manager
Training Coordinator	1	600,000	Service 2 (training and tours)	AIP STA
Program Officer/AIRN Trainers	4	1,680,000	Support to all services	AIP Program Officers
Total first year salaries:		4,200,000		

The registration process of AIRN is still underway, and is expected to be completed by end of Y3. Once the services and organizational structure have been finalized, the Advisory Board, with the help from the AIRN team, will finalize the charter, mission and by-laws in detail. It is expected that the interim Advisory Board will agree on the governance (charter, by-laws) by the end of Y4Q1. A tentative governance structure is provided in Figure 1.

As per the existing plan, the Board of Directors, comprising of 21 members, will be elected by their respective *upazila* Committee representatives. And therefore, each Director will also act as the District Representative. A second election will be held within the 21 elected Board of Directors for the four positions – Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Other Directors will be ushered into the Standing Committee to oversee certain issues such as finance, membership for them to report to the Chairman for final approval.

Figure 1: Tentative AIRN governance structure

1.2.2 Define Membership Structure

AIRN membership can mainly be classified into three categories (see Table 4 and Figure 2):

- Associate
- Accredited
- Champion (former *Astha*)

Table 4: AIRN member type differentiation

	Provisional Members (only applicable for women prior to becoming Associate/Accredited)	Associate Members	Accredited Members	Champion Members
Current status	52	1,033	1,125	-
Proposed fee/month	No fee	No fee	BDT 200	Not decided yet
Pre-requisites/criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interested to join AIRN - Women-entrepreneurs only - Interested to match AIP grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GOB license holder - Physical shop in place (rent/own) - Expressed interest to join AIRN at the membership drive event or to the ad-hoc committee and willing to pay membership fee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Passed the 3-day basic training - Signed the 'code of conduct' (see Annex 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regularly shares financial and other M&E information with AIRN - Interested to mentor others - Willing to volunteer for AIRN (see Annex 3)

Membership Fee: A consultation workshop will be carried out during Y4Q3 with a wider stakeholder group to decide the membership fee and its collection process. A preliminary discussion with select retailers indicates that this fee should not be more than BDT 200 per month. This structure will be gradually built over time, for example, BDT 75-100 per month during LOP. Collected fees during LOP would be transferred to AIRN once the project is finished.

Membership Benefits: In contrast to earlier plans, a significant difference has been created between Associate and Accredited members, which are expected to encourage retailer progression. Without the training, Associate members are no different from a non-AIRN member. Hence, the benefits need to be attractive for them to undertake the training and, in the future, contribute, even if it is a very nominal amount. The Champion will be given priority for any exposure on print and electronic media and at any public event (see Table 5 for benefit by membership type).

Figure 2: AIRN Membership: A Sequential Process

A GOB-registered retailer joins AIRN after accepting AIRN membership joining conditions (Associate)



Associate AIRN member undergoes 3 trainings: Safe Use of Agro-Inputs, Business Management, and Agronomic Use of Agro-Inputs; signs the Code of Conduct (Accredited)



Accredited members making visible changes in their shops and maintaining a logbook are given the AIRN logo to be displayed in their shops, usually within 2-3 months of being accredited



"Champion" AIRN members will be selected after monitoring their performance for at least a year.

Table 5: Potential AIRN member benefits

	Benefits	Provisional	Associate	Accredited	Champion
1	Support to license registration and renewal	√	√	√	√
2	Monthly Price Bulletin		√	√	√
4	Access/eligibility to basic training		√	NA	NA
5	Access to Call Center promotional materials		√	√	√
6	Access to advanced training (for a fee)			√	√
7	Access to learning visit/tours			√	√
8	Eligible to be listed for group purchase			√	√
9	Eligible for credit/cash facility/linkage			√	√
10	Eligible for training/facilitation on micronutrient business			√	√
11	Spokesperson in radio or other exposure in print media or to farmers groups				√
12	Linkage to quality input seller/dealership			√	√
13	Technical Booklet			√	√
14	Project-supported grants (as applicable)	√			

1.2.3 Build Additional Services

AIRN has generated interest among the retailers, but to keep the momentum going, the network must develop services which are demand-driven, and at the same time profitable. Internally, AIRN will incur costs to build or maintain resources needed to provide such services. Thus, a balance is required between what the popular services are and what the network can realistically provide, at least in AIRN's initial years. While shortlisting the services, two issues are critical: 1) profit-making services and 2) core services (those that are the essence of AIRN, which may not generate any revenue, let alone profit). Table 6 provides a picture of services planned for AIRN's early years.

Table 6: Illustrative AIRN member services

	Services for Year 1 of AIRN	Profit-Making	Core	Comments
1	Basic and Advanced Training/Study Tour	√		This service is available to AIRN members but will be also pitched to development projects/ INGOs/ local NGOs/ donors (including USAID)
2	Cash/credit facility or linkage	√		Part of the membership fee and part of the profit (if applicable) might be used to create a pool of funds, which the UZ <i>committees</i> can use for the benefit of the members.
3	Group Purchase (PSE and Agro-Input)	√		Partnership with private sector needs to be developed
4	Quality Input (Micronutrient) Business	√		A feasibility study will be conducted prior to initiating such attempts
5	Facilitate registration and renewal of members		√	A nominal service fee could be charged
6	Promoting AIRN retailers as quality input sellers to farmers/awareness on quality		√	Awareness amongst farmers should increase the sales of AIRN retailers
7	Linkage to quality input sellers/dealer/private companies/ government programs		√	AIRN retailers could be linked to the distribution channel of private companies
Other Services				
8	Linkage to other development projects		√	In the absence of direct revenue, this should not be prioritized in the first year.
9	Product demonstration		√	
10	Signboard and shop design for AIRN Champions		√	
11	Product diversification (fish, feed, dairy input, etc.) through linkage and training		√	
12	Call Center (see detailed section below)		√	

13	Seed Marketing	√		A significant task, which should be explored later when AIRN is financially and operationally ready
14	Contract Growing	√		
15	Agro-Tech Fair	√		

It is expected that AIRN will provide these services beyond LOP. Therefore, services need to be developed and internal capacity built during Y4. Partnership with other stakeholders such as private companies, service providers and development projects will be explored in the coming year.

A summary of the services planned for AIRN's first year is given below:

1. Basic and Advanced Training: AIRN is expected to be a top training service provider in the coming years, the modules and trainers for which are being developed during the LOP. While third parties – a private service provider and other input-selling private companies – currently provide these trainings, strategies have been undertaken to create a pool of internal trainers comprised of AIRN members and POs (see Task 1.1) to provide training services beyond LOP.

To date, retailers have praised the content and structure of AIRN training, however whether they would pay for it is a matter of question. A decades-long development culture has undermined the market for provision of fee-based training. The target group in Bangladesh is habituated with the practice of receiving honorariums, bags, gifts, etc. in addition to a free training. This will be a major barrier in charging fees to the retailers, no matter how necessary and effective the training.

An experiment will be conducted in Y4 to determine if retailers are willing to pay a nominal fee to enable a culture of fee-based training. As a contingency plan, instead of asking the retailers to pay for the training, other development projects could be potential customers who need to ensure such training for their beneficiaries. Given the current situation, this seems a much more realistic option. GMark, however, could be the biggest competitor in this case.

2. Cash facility/joint fund: Although AIP decided to withdraw from the credit guarantee fund for retailers, there is a demand for cash as operating capital or credit. Credit facility as a benefit of any association/network/*samity* is deeply rooted in the history of development practice in Bangladesh. It is AIP's assumption, due to the practices in Bangladesh and especially the successes of micro-credit, that access to funds is a major incentive. Interactions with few *upazila* committees and few advisory board members also vouch for similar needs. They expect to keep a part of the membership drive for running each *upazila* committee (renting an office space or bearing meeting expenses), and part to raise operating capital to conduct business in cash.

The input retailing business runs on credit, and therefore, the AIRN retailers will get a better price if transactions with company representatives (input suppliers) are in cash. The company representatives will seemingly be in favor of such an arrangement since they will not have to chase the retailers to pay back. A cash joint fund as opposed to credit could be a useful service to meet primary demands at the field level in addition to possible financing opportunities through the USAID-BRAC *Anonno* SME loan program.

3. Group Purchase: AIRN will establish deals with wholesalers and large input-sellers to regularly procure agro-inputs in large quantities at a better rate through group purchases. The *upazila* committees will file their regular needs to AIRN, based on which the Secretariat can either procure or facilitate the procurement of inputs for a service fee. This will ensure a regular income for AIRN and a better deal for each retailer. Ideally, buying through AIRN should be cheaper than the price retailers would have otherwise paid if they bought individually. Private companies might prefer the arrangement as well since it allows greater and easier outreach to more customers.

4. Quality Input (Micronutrient) Business: Based on demands of the Advisory Board, AIRN aims to get involved in the micronutrient business on a small scale. It is reported that the market is saturated with adulterated micronutrients (zinc and boron, in particular), an issue that AIRN members could address through its reach to 3,000 retailers. A study will be conducted in Y4 to see the feasibility of this business as a major revenue stream for AIRN.

5. Facilitate registration/renewal of members: With a better connection to the *Upazila* Agriculture Officers (DAE) and a stronger reputation established, AIRN will facilitate the registration of new and provisional retailers and the annual renewal of licenses for the Associate and Accredited members. The *Upazila* Agriculture Officers will be invited to every membership drive and kept informed of services that AIRN is providing at the field level. This is expected to build a better relationship between AIRN and government officers, who approve the registration and renewal of licenses at the *upazila* level. While individual retailers may have to wait for hours or move from table to table to complete this process, as a united force, AIRN aims to expedite the process.

6. Promote AIRN retailers to farmers as quality input sellers: AIRN, with its established connection with farmers groups built during the LOP will continue promoting the benefits of buying from its membership. This is a continuous promotion which AIRN will undertake to increase retailers' incomes, which will in turn increase demands for AIRN membership.

Although no farmer group is directly working with AIP, in Y4 and Y5 the project plans to build relationships with farmers groups working with other FTF projects, such as connecting AIRN Accredited retailers to more than 200 farmer producer groups (groups working in aquaculture, chili or mung bean value chains) in Agricultural Extension Support Activity Project's (AESAs) target areas (Kalia, Chuagachha, Faridpur Sadar and Barisal Sadar). This, however, is only a first step, and AIRN will need to proactively seek partnerships and better relationships with farmers groups or other development projects that work with farmers groups since farmers are the retailers' customers.

7. Linkages to quality input seller/private company dealership/government programs: A private company dealership ensures a sustainable income, and in most cases, better income for input retailers. AIP is currently in talks with private companies such as Rahimafrooz who are willing to expand their dealership and distribution channels. AIRN's well-trained and monitored retailers could potentially become their dealers. The profits from linkages between retailers and private companies would work to attract retailers to become AIRN members.

In the Y4, AIRN must establish linkages with government programs which have a similar mandate for ensuring quality inputs. Since members will pay dues to AIRN from 2016, they will constantly calculate what they are getting in return of their money. Linkage with existing programs of the government, development projects and other private companies should be prioritized so that members are benefitted from time to time.

AIRN Call Center

In addition to the member services mentioned above, AIP has launched the AIRN Call Center, to address issues of quality in agro-inputs. AIP will continue assisting AIRN to implement a consumer call center to identify patterns of poor quality agro-inputs in Y4. Quality-related complaints are being reported to the call center by farmers who have purchased such goods from AIRN member retailers. The call center will be promoted through posters, leaflets, stickers and bulk SMS. The call center number will also be posted in AIRN member retailer shops. The call center will record data on products reported as ineffective, adulterated, or mislabeled, e.g., product purpose, name, type, company name, name of shop where purchased (AIRN member shop), and date of expiry.

AIRN will look for patterns of reportedly bad products sold by AIRN Accredited retailers. When patterns are identified, AIRN will investigate the issue and work with the concerned company and its wholesalers to make them aware. AIRN may also inform the BSA, BCPA or the BFA about patterns of reportedly bad products.

If the caller needs specific agronomic/production/ pest-control related advice, the call center agent will refer the retailer to other call centers such as the Win Miaki Call Center or AESA Farmer Query Call Center.

Task 1.3 Promote AIRN among Agro-Input Dealers in the FTF Zone

1.3.1 Increase AIRN Membership among Agro-Retailers

To date, there are approximately 2,000 AIRN members (Associate and Accredited.) To meet AIP's target of 3,000 retailers, the membership drives must reach another 1,000 new retailers. Based on the experience in the last six months, the project is hopeful to reach this target before the end of Y4. This, however, is subject to political stability in the country and existing human resources.

The project may continue membership drives until December 2016 to make up for possible member drop-outs. Charging a membership fee may also result in a loss of at least 10-15% of members.

Currently, membership drives are conducted by AIP staff, namely POs. Retailers in a particular *upazila* are invited to a local school or college compound where AIP staff explain the structure and plan of AIRN, and respond to queries. The AIRN Coordinator or the Deputy Coordinator will remain present in each membership drive to oversee the event, respond where necessary and address expectations. Retailers may also become members of AIRN if they contact the *upazila* ad-hoc committee at a later date.

Special Membership Drive

In the initial years of the project, AIP partnered with various private companies for training on a cost-sharing basis with a hope that retailers chosen by the private sector might become members of AIRN. This, however, did not happen in many cases since many trained retailers conduct business without authorized licenses, or without fulfilling the minimum requirement for having a shop, which automatically disqualifies them for AIRN membership. This has created a pool of trained retailers who have yet to be AIRN members. A special membership drive will be conducted in Y4 to bring approximately 350 trained retailers under the umbrella of AIRN. The current scenario is as follows:

- Total retailers trained via AIP: 2105
- AIRN Accredited members: 1,125
- Trained via AIP, yet not AIRN members: 980
- Not eligible for AIRN membership: 517

AIRN will undertake other promotional activities to increase membership as well, such as publishing and distributing promotional materials, organizing an Agro-Tech Fair, and connecting with farmers groups through field-days, fairs or meetings. In addition, AIRN plans to carry out outreach events to every district to increase its membership-base and to give the existing members a better understanding of their responsibilities and expectations.

With the governance structure in place, and services ready to be delivered, AIP hopes that by Y4Q3 AIRN will undertake promotional outreach events with farmers groups with the help of other FTF

projects and continue this outreach from Y4Q4 onwards. Table 7 presents training and membership activities for Y4.

Table 7: Training and membership Y4 activity timeline

Project Task		2015			2016									AIP Lead	Leads, Partners, and Collaborators	
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		IPs	Collaborating Partner
1.1.1	Partnership approach with Gmark													STA	Gmark	AIRN
	Train the POs													STA	BAU	AIRN
	Direct Delivery approach													STA	POs	AIRN
	Training via private companies													STA	Private Companies	AIRN
	Advance module development													STA	BAU/BARI/DAE	
1.1.2	Domestic study tours													STA, AIRN Coordinator	Different companies/organizations	AIP + AIRN
	International study tours													STA, AIRN Coordinator, Director	NAETC, KU, Thailand	
1.2.1	Detailed charter finalization													ACBD	AIRN Advisory Board	AIP staff
	AIRN starts with a separate bank account													ACBD	AIRN Advisory Board	AIP staff
1.2.2	Membership criteria and benefits redefined													ACBD	AIRN Advisory Board	AIRN Coordinator
	Champion defined													ACBD	AIRN Coordinator	AIP staff
	Fee collection													AIRN Coordinator	AIRN POs	AIRN Advisory Board
1.2.3	Business plan finalization													ACBD	AIRN Coordinator	AIRN Advisory Board + AIP staff
	Provision of services													AIRN Coordinator	AIRN POs	AIRN Advisory Board + ACBD
	Development and fine-tuning of additional services													ACBD	AIRN Coordinator	AIRN Advisory Board
1.3	Membership drive													AIRN Coordinator	Deputy Coordinator	AIRN Advisory Board + DAE
	Special membership drive													AIRN Coordinator	Deputy Coordinator	AIRN Advisory Board
	Promotional event with farmers groups													AIRN Coordinator	Deputy Coordinator	Various Farmers groups
	Coordination with other FTF projects													ACBD	AIRN	Other FTF projects

Intervention 2: Improve Effectiveness of Agricultural Inputs Market Information Systems

Task 2.1 Develop GIS for Agricultural Input Supply and Demand

2.1.1 Develop Input-Specific MIS Tool

Implementation of GIS in support of a market information system (MIS) in Y4 will focus on hosting the system in a cloud and setting the functionality to reflect the collected information that relates to AIRN member retailers. According to MoUs with different companies, AIP will provide access to the system to nominated persons from the company who will receive limited access to the base layers and their provided retailers' locations and addresses in Y4Q1.

AIP will collect 90% of the targeted 3,000 retailers' point locations in Y4 along with the AIRN member retailers' business, sales and basic information. After migrating the MIS-GIS to a cloud-based server, AIP will create a basic MIS-GIS graphical user interface (GUI) on the AIP website which will show base layers and some basic information on AIRN member retailers and trends on products and crops. For the analytical maps, there will be a separate tab on the AIP website with a map description.

The MIS-GIS will likely be hosted on Amazon Instance, as it possesses advantages for using GIS and is reasonably priced. It is also a secure and recognized cloud. Once the system is hosted on the cloud, AIP will still have the capacity to customize details as necessary. The greatest challenge will be to design a user-friendly interface. Hosting and interface adjustments will be completed by the end of Y4Q2.

AIP's sub-recipient Spatial Systems Associates (SSA) will create an easy user guide for future stakeholders of the system along with the detailed technical user guide for experts within AIP. The technical user guide will contain detailed instructions for basic designs, regular updates, operational functions, and security.

Some of the above mentioned work is a continuation from Y3 implementation plan. Most tasks are in the final stage and await final touches. The tasks to be completed in Y4 are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: MIS Y4 activity timeline

Project Task	2015			2016									AIP Lead	Leads, Partners, and Collaborators	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		IPs	Collaborating Partner
Retailers point data collection													GISS	AIP	
Host MIS-GIS to the cloud													GISS	AIP/SSA	
Provide password to the selected audience													GISS	AIP/SSA	Private company partners
Map upload and design for the AIP website													GISS/I TCS	AIP	
Recheck the point location with FPO													GISS	AIP	
Create user manual													GISS	AIP/SSA	
MIS-GIS formal launching													GISS	AIP	
Map the demo plot													GISS	AIP	

Task 2.2 Improve Dissemination of Inputs Supply Information

2.2.1 Create and Distribute Directory of Input Supply Companies and Wholesalers

In Y3, AIP completed a survey of input companies and wholesalers (through Nielsen Company (Bangladesh) Ltd.) in the FTF zone. The survey sought to record company/wholesaler contact and ordering information as well as available products in order to produce a printed, and possibly electronic, directory for AIRN members free of charge as a member service. The directory will be available and distributed by Y4Q1, as per a revised schedule (see Table 9).

The AIP GIS team has already started uploading the survey point data to the MIS-GIS system, in order to envision the supply side more clearly, with a plan to complete it by Y4Q1.

AIP is also using this survey to populate a separate master list of GoB-registered fixed retailers who conduct business within the FTF districts. This master list is helping AIP to identify and tactically target potential AIRN members.

Table 9: Supplier directory Y4 completion timeline

Project Task	2015			2016									AIP Lead	Leads, Partners, and Collaborators	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		IPs	Collaborating Partner
Completion of design and printing of supplier directory													MEA/CD	AIP	Design and print firm
Dissemination of printed directory to AIRN retailers													MEA/CD	AIP	

Task 2.3 Improve Agro-Inputs Monthly Price Information

2.3.1 Creation and Distribution of Agro-Inputs Monthly Price Outlook Bulletin

The lack of accurate, up-to-date information on agro-inputs is one of the major constraints to agricultural productivity and to the development of business linkages and trade in the FTF zone. To address this issue, AIP took the initiative to create Agro-Inputs Monthly Price Outlook Bulletin (MPOB), update it regularly and distribute the MPOB among AIRN member retailers and other stakeholders.

The MPOB provides agro-inputs' (seed, fertilizer and crop protection product) prices that are prominently traded in the FTF. This is an AIRN service provided to its members. Using this MPOB, AIRN member retailers can judge which products to buy at the best price. In Y4, the MPOB will be enriched with new features, including new products' information, addresses of wholesalers/companies, success stories, and other useful information related to agro-inputs.

Through a survey in the FTF zone, AIP identifies mostly traded agro-inputs and the associated companies. Each month, AIRN POs collect information on prices and trends from regionally based wholesalers. Principal wholesalers are consulted monthly in four broad regions: Barisal, Khulna, Jessore, and Faridpur. It was found that there is negligible wholesale price variation from region to region. Thus the arithmetic average reflects what a retailer may expect to pay, regardless of location. AIP conducts similar surveys every year to include newly introduced, commonly traded agro-inputs and include those in the MPOB.

Dissemination of MPOBs is in hard copy and bulk posted to AIRN members and industry stakeholders. Electronic versions of the MPOB are also available on AIP's website.

Task 2.4 Increase Awareness and Demand for Quality Inputs

Demonstration plots are a tool to display the benefits of, and induce demand for quality agricultural inputs for, selected crops. Demonstrations display the appropriate inputs' application practices, taking into account farmers' net return, health and safety, and impact on the environment. Demonstrations strengthen linkages between farmers and AIRN member retailers as they will raise awareness of farmers on the benefits of purchasing quality products from retailers. Plots' productivity and the environmental impacts of agricultural activities will be monitored to compare their output with that of nearby controls that do not utilize higher quality inputs and environmentally-responsible application practices.

To have greater impact from these demonstration plots with quality inputs, approximately 200 demonstrations and field days will be conducted in Y4, primarily in the environments of individual AIRN member retailers' shops so that customers visiting the shops are exposed to and able to observe the profitability and effectiveness of the proper use of quality inputs and techniques used in plots and to learn how to source these inputs.

2.4.1 Conduct Collaborative Demos and Field Days

Collaborative demo plots with input companies and other FTF projects

AIP signed MOUs with six private input companies to establish demonstration plots via cost-sharing modalities. Through demo plots, AIP, in partnership with existing programs and through collaboration with trusted input companies, will educate farmers on a variety of critical topics including:

- Comparing and contrasting performance of improved seed varieties, particularly the differences between farmers' traditional varieties and commercially available improved varieties;
- Promotion of high value horticultural and in-demand crops with expected direct impacts on the nutritional status of farming households and smallholder revenues;
- Promoting safe handling/use/disposal of inputs in collaboration with input suppliers.

While input supply companies will supply seeds, fertilizer, and other inputs and relevant printed materials, AIRN member retailers will serve as a focal point for the demo plots. They will assist AIP in identifying land and labor for the demonstration plots and will manage that demo's lifecycle.

Demo plots will also be established when and where appropriate in collaboration with other FTF projects like AESA, Agricultural Value Chains (AVC) and AIN.

Field Days

Field days linked with demonstration plots (1 field day per demo) that utilize quality inputs were launched in Y2. The strategy of farmers' field days (FFD) is that customers, once convinced of the profitability and effectiveness of the inputs and techniques used in plots, can purchase input supplies from retailers most proximate to their farms. In Y4, FFDs will continue focus on messages on safe and judicious use of pesticides, shared by AIP's Environmental Specialist for awareness and safety of the farmers.

Intervention 3: Enhance Knowledge and Application of Quality Standards

Task 3.1 Enhance Stakeholders' Knowledge on Industry Quality Standards

3.1.1 Promote Quality Inputs through Multi-Media Campaigns, and

3.1.2 Reach Agro-Retailers and Farmers via Development and Distribution of Publications on Quality Standards

As described in AIP's modified program description, AIP will adopt a robust multi-media and outreach approach in project years 4 and 5. This campaign will aim to:

- Create and maintain awareness amongst AIRN member retailers and their client farmers to recognize, demand, and understand the benefits of quality agro-inputs;
- Improve recognition and knowledge of:
 - a. GOB's statutory parameters that govern quality along supply chains of seed, fertilizers, and crop protection products (CPPs);
 - b. Other science-based quality parameters; and
 - c. Conventional wisdom to guide buyers and sellers.
- Ensure that successes are promoted to USAID, the general public (in-country and international), the media and other target audiences identified below.

AIP will reach agro-retailers and farmers via development and dissemination of communications materials on quality standards

- **Unique shop signs:** Signs will be installed at all AIRN members' shops to uphold branding of AIRN as promoting quality agro-inputs. It will help consumers/farmers to recognize these shops as a source of quality products.
- **Disseminating booklets, brochures, posters:** Communications materials on recognizing quality agro-inputs available in printed version will improve knowledge of both retailers and farmers. Promoting the AIRN call center in these materials will create wider opportunity for them to report problems with purchased inputs.
- **Quiz competition:** AIP will arrange quiz competitions among retailers and farmers during farmers' field days to motivate them to advance knowledge and practices of quality agro-inputs. Introduction of quiz sections in the MPOB for retailers will serve the same purpose as well as make this document more interactive with its audience. Quizzes will raise awareness about quality products.

While the primary audience for this campaign will be AIRN members, and agro-input retailers, wholesalers and farmers at large in the FTF zone, secondary audiences such as business associations (BSA, BFA, BCPA), input supply companies, NGOs (who extend agro-input-related activities into the FTF zone), DAE field staff and the Ministry of Agriculture's (MOA) Agriculture Information Service (AIS), mass media, and youth will also be affected. Finally, the campaign will reach a tertiary audience of USAID/Bangladesh, other FTF implementers, USAID/FTF (DC) and others (see Table 10).

AIP will apply 9 strategies to ensure widespread dissemination of information on quality inputs:

- **Strategy One:** Embrace and employ mass media to create and maintain awareness amongst retailers and their client farmers to recognize and demand quality agro-inputs.

- **Strategy Two:** Engage in a multi-year SMS campaign to reach rural target audiences with diverse messaging.
- **Strategy Three:** Produce videos to engage various audiences with quality information.
- **Strategy Four:** Develop a comprehensive photo library to enhance the quality and aesthetics of promotional materials, e-booklets, fact sheets, videos and success stories.
- **Strategy Five:** Utilize USAID/B and AIP's Facebook and AIP's website to provide timely AIRN updates and engage target audiences to learn more about the quality of agro-inputs.
- **Strategy Six:** Produce communication collateral materials that will educate and engage various target audiences.
- **Strategy Seven:** Utilize signage for key messages
- **Strategy Eight:** Continually develop success stories to complement the on-going strategies listed above
- **Strategy Nine:** Plan, host and attend events to help gain greater visibility for AIP/AIRN

Assessment of the strategy and re-planning

Via regular assessments, AIP will review the impact of its communications strategy (mass media campaigning, SMS and other related communications materials). These communications channels will foster awareness on quality agro-inputs, improve advisory services and practice of using quality inputs respectively by retailers and farmers.

To create the strategy, AIP used secondary information *i.e.*, GOB data for selecting communications channels. As AIP anticipates that all the communications campaign elements will be launched by January 2016, AIP will carry forward a random sample survey in June 2016 to assess materials' effect through focus group discussion and key person's interviews. AIP will measure both quantity and quality issues *i.e.* number viewers of PSA/ TV ad, people receiving SMS, number of people observing billboards, posters, leaflets and their ability to repeat the key messages. Benefit, awareness, and practice of key messages will be measured during the assessment, and course corrections will be made as necessary. In addition, AIP has plan for pre-testing before finalizing 5 posters and 3 PSA/TV ads in order to improve/tailor the effectiveness of the messages to its target audience.

Table 10: Communications campaign Y4 activity timeline

Project Task	2015			2016									AIP Lead	Leads, Partners, and Collaborators	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		IPs	Collaborating Partner
AIRN Newsletter (2)													CS		
Develop 5 posters on nutrition, seed, fertilizer, CPP (retailers), CPP(farmers)													CD	Media Com (ad firm)	

Develop 2 leaflets on micro-nutrient fertilizer, call center promotion																CD	Media Com (ad firm)	
Develop and install 7 billboards																CS	Media Com (ad firm)	
Develop 3,000 small shop signs for AIRN retailers																CS	Media Com (ad firm)	
SMS campaign - 3 lakh SMS to farmers and retailers																CS/ITCS	Expressions (ad firm)	
3 PSA (TV Ad) on quality seed, correct dose/use of fertilizer and safe use of CPP																CD	Channel I, ATN Bangla/NTV and local cable TV	AIS, BCPA, BFA, BSA

Task 3.2 Better Quality Adherence among Private Sector Agro-Input Companies

3.2.1 Improve Supply-Side Quality through Certification and Traceability

International certification (e.g., QMS, EMS, OHS, IMS, and ISTA) for any organization is a fundamental requirement for its sustainability and competitiveness. Continual self-improvement and sustained profit generation is required, while satisfying customers' requirements and aspirations. In this regard, AIP is in the process of assisting agro-input companies and associations in obtaining international certification assistance (ISA). This process will take place in two phases:

Phase I: Gap/situation analysis of companies/associations for international certification.

Phase II: Assistance for companies/associations for obtaining and/or implementing international certification (as determined by outcomes of Phase I).

The AIRN Supply Chain Advisor along with an international certification expert (local consultant) will perform this work.

Traceability

Traceability systems aim to assure farmers of the authenticity of their purchased agro-inputs. The prominent input suppliers are losing a significant percentage (around 30%) of their potential sales due to these illegal activities (i.e. counterfeiting) by dishonest businessmen, who counterfeit the packets of good quality agro-inputs, fill it with poor quality materials, and sell it as the original. Farmers suffer due to purchasing counterfeited agro-inputs, and in most cases end up with poor or no yields. A standard traceability system can assist bonafide agro-input suppliers and farmer to avoid this problem.

Authenticity of agro-inputs can be ensured by introducing Unique Number Tagging (UNT) on the agro-inputs packets. Farmers can send a code through very basic mobile phone sets to an Unstructured Supplementary Services Data (USSD) system. The secured server (with genuine agro-inputs' codes) will then revert back with a "YES/NO" answer to inform the farmer whether that particular agro-input is adulterated genuine or not. To promote sustainability and ownership of this service and technical know-how, this will be done by using the AIRN Call Center, where the farmer would report the code to the Call Center agent. Then, the Call Center agent will verify the code and get back to farmer with a response.

In consultation with partner companies and associations, AIP will identify the area of cooperation and extend activities of AIP in terms of traceability. AIP may work together with a service provider (e.g., Win Miaki, mPower) to provide this traceability. See Table 11 for activity timeline.

Table 11: International Certification and Traceability Y4 Activity Plan

Project Task	2015			2016									AIP Lead	Leads, Partners, and Collaborators	
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		IPs	Collaborating Partner
Improve Supply-Side Quality through International Certification Assistance													ASCA	AIRN	Agro-input companies and associations
Improve Supply-Side Quality through Traceability System													ASCA	AIRN	WinMiaki, mPower

Task 3.3 Promote Knowledge of Quality Standards through Agricultural Exhibitions

3.3.1 Conduct AIRN Agro-Tech Fairs

In Y3, AIP supported AIRN to stage a regional agricultural exhibition in December 2014, since this is a relatively calm sales period in the input supply calendar. The exhibition was designed to demonstrate innovative management techniques and products. AIP supported AIRN and the key associations to take leading roles in facilitating exhibitions, with the intention of drawing in additional stakeholders from across the national and international input supply sector. At the Fair, new products and innovations were introduced and research bodies, other agriculture innovation projects, and non-for-profits were also encouraged to participate. Generally, participants included farmers, retailers, equipment and finance companies, regional and national wholesalers, international input manufacturers, and agro-processors.

AIP will hold its second exhibition in Jessore from November 30-December 2, 2015. An event organizer (Event Exposure) has been selected to organize and manage the fair. The theme of the second fair is “**Did you know? Quality agro-inputs are around you**”. It is expected that new products and farmer-friendly technology will be displayed in the fair.

The AIP communications team will raise awareness about the Fair through:

- Print and audio visual materials related to fair i.e., posters, PSAs on cable TV (local dish channel), announcement (miking);
- Traditional media to reach farmers or semi-literate groups i.e., folk songs (organized by private companies), audio-visual documentations by private sectors/associations (using existing materials), photo exhibitions, photo features; and
- Media coverage for mass communication

Possible Fair participants/exhibitors will be sought from:

- Companies and large distributors of seed, fertilizer, and crop protection products; industries’ membership associations; companies and large distributors of aquaculture feed and agro-tech machinery (planting, seeding, seed cleaning, tractors, threshers, sprayers, tillage, sowing, harvesting, and irrigation);
- New ventures, start-up companies, and businesses that offer innovative products and services;

- Integrated pest management (IPM) initiatives, including compost producers;
- Companies and ventures dealing in nutrient-dense and nutritious crops;
- Government Organizations, NGOs, research institutes, projects, and other groups that promote quality agricultural inputs, agricultural technologies, and information communications technology (ICT);
- Companies and wholesalers of personal safety equipment (PSE) and field crop applicators for CPPs;
- Food processing companies;
- Solar energy and irrigation firms; and
- Floriculture outfits, nurseries, and hatcheries.

Information about upcoming exhibitions will be disseminated to producers and retailers through the media, associations, DAE, USAID implementing partners, and partner NGO networks.

Task 3.4 Analyze Agricultural Inputs Policy and Regulatory Constraints

3.4.1 Analyze Standards and Policy Implementation

In order to take into account changes in the seed sector and maintain relevancy for sector actors, the existing Seed Policy and Act needs to be updated. In Y4, AIP will continue its representation in the Seed Policy and Act reform committee formed by the MOA. The committee is comprised of members from BSA, representatives from private seed companies, scientists, policy makers, concerned officials from the GoB and other stakeholders. Through its seventh meeting in June 2015, a draft updated seed policy was developed and opened for comments by the members. Another two to three meetings will be required to finalize changes to the seed policy. Upon ratification of these changes, the committee will then work toward implementation.

In addition, AIP is holding meetings with BSA to identify and analyze constraints in the implementation of the Seed Policy and Act. In Y4, AIP will collect BSA's comments and suggestions to overcome constraints. BSA's comments and suggestions will then be submitted to USAID for onward submission to the Bangladesh Policy Research and Strategy Support Program (BPRSSP). The Agriculture Policy Support Unit (APSU), a collaborative unit of IFPRI and GoB, is anticipated to then present the issue to the MOA to ensure changes in the Policy and Acts.

3.4.2 Develop Quality Standards

Together with the Seed Wing of the MOA, AIP has held regular meetings to set seed health standards for four notified crops namely rice, wheat, jute and potato. There are no seed health standards in the country to regulate seed quality. By the end of Y4, AIP and the Seed Wing will develop seed health standards that will ensure seed quality for the four notified crops noted in Table 12.

Table 12: Notified crops to undergo health standardization

Name of crop	Name of seed-borne pathogen	Name of seed-borne disease
Wheat	<i>Bipolaris sorokiniana</i>	Leaf blight
Jute	<i>Macrophomina phaseolina</i>	Stem rot
Potato	(i) <i>Ralstonia solanacearum</i> (<i>Pseudomonas solanacearum</i>)	(i) Bacterial wilt/Brown rot
Paddy	<i>Fusarium moniliforme</i>	Bakanae

In Y4, quality issues which are regulated by input regulatory framework for seed fertilizer and plant protection products will be addressed in close collaboration with concerned industry associations.

Improved awareness of and compliance with quality standards by stakeholders will be promoted by media campaigns and round table dialogue between public private stakeholders. AIP will assist the industry associations to present the outcomes of round table discussions to the MOA.

Intervention 4: Strengthening Local Organizations' Institutional Capacity

Task 4.1 Assess Organizational Capacity of Select Local Organizations

4.1.1 Conduct Organizational Capacity Assessments (OCA)

This intervention is designed to build the capacity of local organizations to increase capacity and compliance with USAID award eligibility requirements. Capacity building support will be provided to industry association partners - BSA, BFA, BCPA and AIRN. In Y2, AIP initiated the process of assessments of three business associations through a contract with the Capacity Building Service Group (CBSG) to perform Organizational Capacity Assessments (OCA) and Organizational Capacity Development (OCD). In Y3, CBSG finished assessing the organizational capacity of three business associations - BSA, BCPA and BFA. As per the OCAT score, BFA ranked the highest, followed by BCPA, while BSA stands a distant third. This means BSA, despite the best efforts, may not reach a stage where they can meet USAID award eligibility requirements. However, steps have been agreed to gradually improve their organizational capacity.

In Y4, CBSG is expected to complete OCD of all three business associations (with a tailored approach for BSA). In addition, the project aims to assess the capacity of AIRN, once it is registered and ready, at least six months after starting operations. The registration process has been underway for quite some time, in fact, overdue by now. It is expected that AIRN will be registered by the end of Y3. The business plan, which is currently being planned with the AIRN Advisory Board (ad-hoc committee) through a consultation process, should be ready by Y4Q1.

Task 4.2 Design and Implement Capacity Building Program for Select Local Organizations

4.2.1 Design and Implement Organizational Capacity Development (OCD) and Improved Membership Services for Business Associations and AIRN

The project shared the outcome of the OCA, which the two associations, BFA and BCPA, wholeheartedly welcomed. Detailed organizational capacity development plans for these two associations have already been jointly discussed agreed upon, starting from Y3Q4 and ending in Y4Q4 (see Table 18; also find description of OCD deliverables and a tentative plan in Annex 4).

BSA representatives, however, are divided on the OCD initiatives. While the Secretariat feels the need for it, a part of the Executive Committee thinks the time and effort required to carry out the OCD process may disrupt regular day-to-day operations of the Secretariat and efforts will be lost if the Executive Director leaves the job. In face of such reservations, the project has encouraged BSA to take up a tailored OCD, which may start late in Y4Q1.

With AIRN, the OCD may start in Y5Q1, which gives an entire year during the LOP for strengthening the AIRN Secretariat.

Once BFA and BCPA have completed the OCD (and are determined to have achieved USAID “pre-award status”), AIP anticipates “testing” their ability to comply with USAID regulations by sub-awarding work to them on interesting initiatives linked to the objectives of AIP. For example, the recycling of used pesticide-bottles, also known as ‘Empty Container Management’ is a critical issue

related to agro-inputs. However, neither AIP nor BCPA has dedicated manpower to run a pilot on this issue. NGOs or local consultancies could be called to be a partner for such a pilot, with BCPA (supported by AIP) as the lead. Similarly, other pilots around the use of technology or agri-business related ideas can be explored through the fund available for sub-awards. See table 13 for activity timeline.

These pilots can turn into sustainable activities for AIRN and its members. For example, with the ECM, money can be generated from the collection and coordination of used and hazardous plastic bottles. This can be done at the point-of-purchase level, where buyers/farmers will get a discount in the next bottle if the used bottles are returned. Companies can pay this sum through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) model, which is being applied for e-waste. BCPA (at least verbally) has shown interest in such schemes since it is an issue of mutual concern. AIRN could generate funds by training and coordinating the retailers, and creating/contributing to a collection point for moving plastic bottles upstream. Any effort around this will be ground-breaking in Bangladeshi context.

AIRN members have expressed interest to launch higher sales of micronutrients in their network. Upon consultation with at least 100 retailers and completion of a study on adulterated micronutrients, it is very clear that the retailers and the farmers are suffering from lack of quality micronutrients. There is a great market demand, for which they suggest AIRN to take up at least one or two new agro-inputs and sell them through AIRN's distribution channel of 3,000 retailers. This, as per the calculation retailers provided, can be the biggest revenue generating stream to run a network, where AIRN will be a driver in the micronutrient supply chain, ensuring quality along the way.

Table 13: Year 4 Intervention 4 Activity Plan

Project Task		2015			2016									AIP Lead	Leads, Partners, and Collaborators	
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep		IPs	Collaborating Partner
4.1	Organizational capacity assessment for AIRN													ACBD	3rd party organization	AIRN
4.2	Organizational capacity development for associations													ACBD	3rd party organization	BSA, BCPA, BFA
4.2	Sub-awards designed															

Cross-Cutting

Gender

AIP attempts to integrate gender-specific programming into every aspect of project activities. AIP's gender working group, the GLC, consists of partner NGO personnel and AIP staff members, led by the AIP Grants Specialist, who work closely with female project beneficiaries. The GLC functions as a project steering committee for integration and implementation of gender and oversees identification of 300 female grant applicants.

Current GLC members include representatives from the Ashroy Foundation, Banchte Shekha and the Association of Voluntary Actions for Society (AVAS). In Y4, GLC meetings will take place quarterly in Khulna and will include updates on grant implementation and new gender issues, as well as an open discussion of member suggestions for improved gender integration.

Y4 GLC activities specifically aim to:

- Assist in the identification of 250 female grantees;
- Conduct four quarterly GLC meetings for oversight of grants and other gender issues;
- Capacity building of GLC members on Women Empowerment and Agriculture Index (WEAI) tool;
- Develop profiles for women retailers to identify current potentialities based on WEAI;
- Capacity building of women retailers through WEAI;
- Engage 750 male retailer mentors for 250 women retailers;
- Assist with seven batches of technical and business training for women grantees (including module on highly nutritious crops);
- Identify 25 “champion” women grantees to support capacity building for other women retailers;
- Observe community acceptance garnering sessions for 10 women retailers;
- Organize three learning sharing sessions with selected successful “couples” at *upazila* level to illustrate successful gender parity at the household level;
- Identify 30 women retailers to establish demo plots with high value nutritious crops;
- Provide two gender, equity and diversity training for new Partner NGO (PNGOs) and AIP staff.

Assist in the identification of 243 female grantees: In Y4, 243 women retailers (7 of total 250 remaining are already identified) will be identified by three PNGOs, namely: Ashroy Foundation-Khulna, Banchte Shekha-Jessore and AVAS-Barisal. Through these activities, the AIP Gender Specialist and GLC members will see that gender messaging is considered across all steps to identify potential women for the grants making process. The types of GLC assistance may include: attendance at 10% of public meetings, site visit of 50% of grant applicants, and attendance at 15% of garnering sessions.

Conduct four quarterly GLC meetings for oversight of grants and other gender issues: The main purpose of GLC Committee is to: oversee that gender messaging and findings from first gender assessment are considered across all activities of AIP/AIRN. Four GLC meetings will be held in Y4 where five regular GLC members and a focal person from the PNGOs will participate. Updates on the grants making process will be a recurring agenda item at the meetings.

Build capacity of GLC members on WEAI tool: Three capacity building initiatives will be taken in Y4 for GLC members to implement WEAI tools. The focus will be women’s leadership development, women’s control over income, and women’s access to resources. The GLC member will apply the knowledge of WEAI tools at the field level towards women’s empowerment.

Develop profiles for 243 (7 of 250 target already complete) women retailers to identify current potentialities based on WEAI: 250 grants applications will be received from qualified applicants. Granting to women will require capacity building such as training, CE support, study tours and champion selections from the WEAI profile of identified women.

Build capacity women retailers through WEAI: Based on the individual condition and position of women, numerous capacity building initiatives will be taken. Through on-the-job support and CE, each individual’s capacity building gap will be addressed.

Engage AIRN well established retailers to mentor 250 AIRN's new women retailers: Expert retailers will help develop the capacity of women retailers through mentoring support. In Y4, AIRN expert retailers will be identified to provide this support, including sharing information on agro-inputs business, exchanging company information and problem solving approaches to deal with day-to-day business management.

Provide 7 batches of technical and business training for women: Technical and business training will be provided by private companies for women retailers' capacity building. The AIP Gender Specialist will observe the training needs assessment process, observe training sessions and provide follow-up on the gender, equity and diversity of 20 FTF districts. At least three batches of training will be overseen by Gender Specialist.

Identify 25 "champion" women grantees to support capacity building for other women retailers: In Y4, 25 "champions" will be identified through a consultative process to provide support to 10 AIP grantees through regular mobile phone communication and shop visits once in a month. A guideline will be developed for mentoring champions.

Observe garnering sessions for 28 women retailers: Garnering sessions are an stakeholder gathering to mobilize all community members in one platform to garner support for women retailers' development. In Y4, 250 garnering sessions will be held. Out of 250, 28 garnering sessions will be observed by AIP staff.

Organize thirty lessons learned sessions with selected successful married couples (at the upazila level) to identify gender parity at household level: Women grantees who receive strong support from their husbands will be highlighted in this session. Lessons learned will be shared among other couples to improve their current household condition and position in agro-inputs retailing sectors. In Y4, 30 lessons learned sessions will be held at Khulna, Jessore, and Barisal.

Organize 6 batches of learning visits by women retailers: Women retailers are new in the agro-business sector and therefore require more practical understanding of the business, which will be facilitated through visits to other women retailers' shops. By Y4, 6 batches of learning visits will be organized. 10 women will participate in each visit and share their experiences with other women retailers.

Identify 30 women retailers to establish demo plots with high value nutritious crops: Thirty demo plots will be established by women retailers in Y4. Demos will focus on homestead gardening with high value nutrient crops to ensure nutrition at the household level.

See Table 14 for gender Y4 activity timeline.

Table 14: Gender Y4 activity timeline

Activities	2015			2016									Total	AIP Lead	IPs
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep			
Assist in the identification of 243 female grantees*	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	21	21	21	243	GM	BS, AF, AVAS
Conduct 4 quarterly GLC meetings	1			1			1				1		4	GS	AIP

Develop WEAI profiles for 243 women retailers	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	21	21	21	243	GS	AIP
Engage 750 AIRN male retailer mentors for 250 AIRN women retailers.	45	60	75	75	55	65	75	75	75	75	55	50	45	750	GS	AIP
Assist with 7 batches of technical and business training for women grantees		1		1		1		1		1	1	1	7	STA	Gmark	
Identify 25 “champion” women grantees to support capacity building for other women retailers		5		5			8			7			25	GS	AIP	
Observe 28 garnering sessions for women retailers	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3		30	GS	BS, AF, AVAS	
Organize 30 lessons learned sessions with successful couples at <i>upazila</i> level	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	30	GS	BS, AF, AVAS	
Identify 30 women retailers to establish demo plots with high value nutritious crops	6	2		4		2	6		2	6		2	30	Policy Advisor	AIP	
Organize 6 batches learning visit by women retailers.				2		2			2				6	GS	BS, AF, AVAS	

*Seven of 250 already completed

Environmental Compliance

Environmental compliance includes compliance to the USAID rules, regulations and guidelines when implementing activities categorized as “Negative Determination with Condition” following USAID environmental procedures (22 CFR216). The activities described under “Negative Determination with Condition” have negative impacts on the environment if the management of activities is not adequate. As a part of environmental compliance, mitigation measures are taken against each activity and monitoring is accomplished as per AIP’s Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (EMMP). Under environmental compliance, the following activities are planned for Y4 (see Table 15).

- Environmental evaluation of demonstration plots including high value nutritious crops and technologies;
- Facilitation of “safe use of pesticides” training during FFDs;
- Capacity building of AIP and its partners’ staff on environmental compliance;
- Environmental evaluation of the following activities as per EMMP:
 - Training of trainers and training of retailers;

- Sales of pesticides AIPN members;
 - Agriculture fair;
 - Demonstration plots including high value nutritious crops and technologies;
 - Support to women grantees;
 - Pesticides safety measures as per AIP Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safer Use Action Plan (PERSUAP).
- *Environmental evaluation of demonstration plots including high value nutritious crops and technologies:* Environmental evaluation is done against each planned demo plots to meet environmental requirements following environmental evaluation checklists. The major environmental criteria are distance from water source, households and animal housing and from Ecologically Critical Area (ECA). The soil texture, depth of underground water, pesticides' active ingredients and its position (allowed or rejected) as per AIP's PERSUAP are also considered as the environmental criteria for selection of demo plots. In Y4, environmental evaluation will be done for approximately 200 demo plots.
 - *Facilitation of "Safe use of pesticides" during FFDs:* As part of SUAP (Safer Use Action Plan) of the PERSUAP, at least 250 sessions on safe use of pesticides will be facilitated during FFDs against established demo plots using flipcharts. In FFDs, basic classification of pesticides, safe application procedures of pesticides, timing of pesticide application, precautions during mixing and applying pesticides, use of personal safety equipment (PSE) while mixing and applying pesticides, safe storage of pesticides, post-application hygiene, disposal of pesticides' containers, bottles and sachets, and treatment methods if someone is affected with pesticides toxicity are discussed in each 1 hour session, facilitated by the AIP environmental team members (interns, Environment and Environmental Specialist). Around 50-150 community farmers are expected to attend each awareness session on safe use of pesticides.
 - *Capacity building of AIP and partner staff on environmental compliance:* In Y4, 4 batches (20 participants/batch) of one-day classroom and practical training on environmental compliance will be facilitated for AIP and its partners' staff. The major focus of the training will be on safe use of pesticides, allowed and rejected list of pesticides, environmental requirements for demonstration, personal safety equipment/materials and other environmental issues.
 - *Environmental monitoring of the following activities as per EMMP:* Environmental monitoring for the mentioned activities will be performed throughout Y4 as per EMMP. The monitoring will be accomplished by Environmental Specialist and trained staff of AIP on environmental issues as per EMMP. Prepared checklists will be used as the tool of monitoring. After monitoring, a comprehensive report will be generated to evaluate the status of mitigation measures planned in EMMP.

Table 15: Environmental compliance activity Y4 timeline

Project Task	2015			2016									AIP Lead	IPs	Collaborating Partners
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep			
Environmental evaluation of demonstration plots													ES	AIP	
Facilitation of "safe use of pesticides" during FFDs													ES	AIP	
Capacity building of AIP and its partner staff on environmental compliance													ES	AIP	

Environmental evaluation of activities as per EMMP:														
1. Training of trainers and training of retailers												STA	AIP	Private sector companies
2. Sales of pesticides by the AIRN members												ES/PO	AIP	
3. Agriculture fair												ES	AIP/AIRN	
4. Demonstration plot including high value nutritious crops and technologies												ES	AIP	Private sector companies
5. Oversight of women grantee retailers												GM/PO	AIP	PNGOs
6. Pesticides safety measures as per AIP PERSUAP												ES	AIP	

Other Issues

Grants

Under Intervention 1, AIP will provide matching grants to support the establishment or strengthening of women-operated agricultural input retail shops in 20 FTF districts. The grants fund is overseen by the AIP Grants Team. These 300 awards (LOP) will utilize a 1:1 cost-share ratio for an average of \$1,000/grant; the matching portion may be met through a combination of cash and/or in-kind contribution.

By the end of Y3, AIP will have accomplished grants distribution to at least 16 women grantees (with 34 more approved by AIP and awaiting USAID approval). Through an intensified grants campaign in Y4, AIP will identify and grant to the remaining 284 women grantees, ensuring adequate time for training and capacity building of these grantees in Y5. In August 2014, three women-led PNGOs in the project's target areas: the Ashroy Foundation, Banchte Shekha, and AVAS (working in Khulna, Jessore, and Barisal, respectively) were contracted to assist AIP in field-based procedures such as collecting grants applications, delivering grant agreements, monitoring benchmark completion, and fulfilling other associated tasks. A process flow chart for the creation of women retail shops through AIP grants is shown in Figure 3.

As many of the women grantees are shifting into the agro-input business, AIP will ensure capacity building support through the PNGOs as well as through existing AIRN members. AIP will identify 30 potential women retailers for mentoring new grantees/on the job support. They will meet on a regular basis to offer advice and mentoring to nine other grantees. This will create strong linkages among the grantees and support their success in agro-business.

PNGOs will publish open advertisements, hold public meetings, evaluate pre-applications for short listing, ascertain the client base, undergo matching grants benchmarks' worksheet process with applicants, fill in grants applications and submit applications and supporting materials through the AIP Grants Team.

To support the work of the PNGOs, AIP grant staff complete site visits of each grantee before submitting her application to the Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC). The TEC then measures prospective applicant's eligibility and as appropriate, recommends to the AIP Chief of Party (COP) for approval. Approved applications are then submitted to USAID for approval.

Once USAID approval is received, the Grants Team conducts an agreement signing ceremony, holds communities garnering sessions for approved applicants, completes grant agreements and in-kind assets transfer, assists with shop organization, conducts quarterly learning sharing meetings, and builds capacity through training. Narrative details of the AIP grant activities are given below (see Table 16 for Y4 timeline):

Activity 1: Conducting of site visits

After receiving grants applications from PNGOs, AIP staff will perform site visits for physical verification of the given information in the grants application form and issue a site visit report to submit to the grants review committee for scoring.

Activity 2: Submission of grants application for review by Grants Technical Evaluation Committee

The AIP grants technical evaluation committee evaluates applicants based on the submitted Grants application and site visit report. The COP is the sole authority to give final approval. After receiving approval, AIP will pass the approved list to PNGOs for their next course of action.

Activity 3: Completion of grant agreements

AIP will complete a formal grant agreement between CNFA and the applicant (both in *Bangla* and English). PNGOs will assist to fully explain and clarify the agreement clauses including both parties' responsibility to the grantee prior to signing by the grantee.

Activity 4: Agreement Signing Ceremony

AIP will arrange agreement signing ceremony with USAID approved applicants to discuss about agreements terms and conditions.

Activity 5: In-kind assets transfer

AIP will take initiative to procure in-kind assets after grantee received trade license for business eligibility (ie., DAE license for pesticides and MOA for seed (where applicable)) based on approved benchmarks and transfer assets to the grantee as mentioned in the benchmark setting and grant agreement. Benchmarks will be completed within a maximum of six months including the grantees matching share.

Activity 6: Assist with shop organization

AIP will assist newly established women-operated shops with their shop physical organization of products, including child-proofing of toxic substances, placement of retail CPPs according to WHO coloring of labels, and orderly stockpiling of inventory.

Activity 7: Grants Monitoring

AIP will conduct quarterly grantee visits and monitoring of grant related issues e.g., in-kind assets condition, grantee record keeping, business status, etc.

Activity 8: Quarterly learning sharing meeting

AIP will continue to conduct quarterly learning meetings for stocktaking of field experience of the three PNGOs. It will also contribute to improvements in the grants making process. Already one learning sharing meeting has been conducted by AIP and the remaining seven will be conducted as per the indicative timeline provided below.

Activity 9: Capacity building training on grants making process

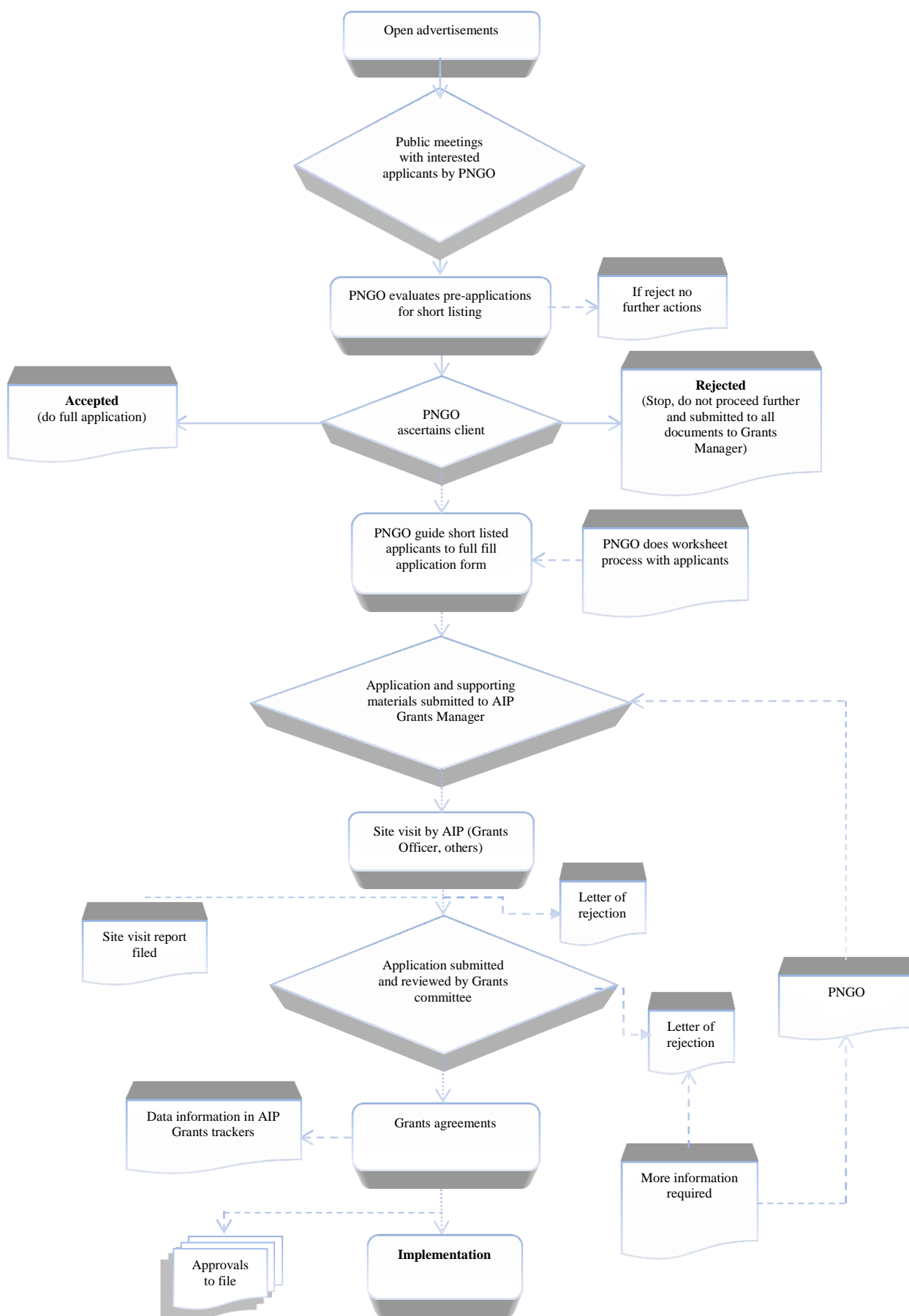
AIP will continue to conduct capacity building support sessions for the three PNGOs for the grant making process.

Table 16: Grants Y4 activity timeline

Project Task	2015			2016									Total	AIP Lead	IPs
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep			
Conducting of site visits	13	18	18	23	26	25	25	22	23	24	25	25	267	GM, GS, GO	AIP
Submission of grant application for review by Grants Technical Evaluation Committee*	17	16	16	22	25	24	25	23	24	23	24	24	263		AIP
Completion of grant agreements	23	23	23	23	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	284		AIP
Agreement Signing Ceremony	1		1		1		1		1		1		6		AIP, AF, BS, AVAS
In-kind assets transfer	15	16	16	22	25	24	25	23	24	23	24	24	261		AIP
Assist with shop organization	15	16	16	22	25	24	25	23	24	23	24	24	261		AIP, AF, BS, AVAS
Grants Monitoring	15	16	16	22	25	24	25	23	24	23	24	24	261		AIP
Conduct quarterly learning sharing meeting	1			1			1			1			4		AIP
Capacity building training on grants making process		1			1			1			1		4		AIP

*Takes into account a 5% rejection rate, to reach a total of 250 grantees.

Figure 3: Grant Process Flow Chart



Sub-Recipients

Through Intervention 4, AIP is strengthening local organizations to increase their operational capacity and in a two cases to ultimately reach USAID financial pre-award status. As part of AIP's approach to achieving this objective, the program has provided technical capacity building and financial assistance to local organizations. The financial assistance portion of this approach takes in sub-awards (under various contractual arrangements) for local organizations, including BSA, BCPA, BFA, and AIRN. The project is not limited to only these four.

Continuing from Y3, AIP will conduct OCD of three input associations: BSA, BCPA, and BFA. However, the process will act in the reverse for AIRN; the organizational capacity development will precede a formal OCA. The type and provision of OCD will depend on the outcomes of the organizational capacity assessments for each organization and may include a combination of technical and organizational development training. Organizational development will include training to develop internal systems and procedures to meet USAID's financial and compliance standards.

Monitoring and Evaluation

AIP initiated revisions to its June 2013-approved M&E Plan for the second time (the first revision was submitted on September 25, 2014) in Y3Q4, considering the implementing experience of the approved M&E Plan (approved in June 2013) and the initial dialogue with USAID and the data quality assessment (DQA) team, during the DQA carried out by Accelerating Capacity for Monitoring and Evaluation (ACME) and USAID in June, 2015.

A key aspect of the revision is the proposition to drop two FTF indicators, in line with the changed focus of the definition of direct beneficiaries. In reality, AIP does not interact significantly with smallholder farmers, who are the clients of AIP's direct beneficiary (agro-inputs retailers). These two indicators are: **4.5.2-5** Number of farmers and others who have applied improved technologies or management practices as a result of USG assistance, and **4.5-16, 17, 18** Gross margin per hectare, animal or cage of selected product. AIP will retain these indicators to report in Y3 FTFMS and annual progress report, and the elimination of these indicators will take effect in Y4 and Y5. Another custom indicator titled "**Number of retailers who retained the seal of quality after audit**" is no longer valid per modification of the AIP program description.

In Y3, the M&E unit routinely shared AIP progress against the set indicators in the monthly staff meetings, and carried out several exercises as part of an internal DQA with documented findings. The AIP M&E unit will continue that practice in Y4 and Y5 and the M&E Plan will be updated annually.

Annex 1: AIP Media Campaign Strategy (February 2015)

“Did You Know?” Communications Campaign

Background:

Agro-Inputs Project (AIP) in Bangladesh, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by CNFA, is working to improve the supply of safe, high-quality agricultural inputs available to farmers through the establishment of the Agro-Inputs Retailers’ Network (AIRN).

Over the five years of project implementation, AIRN will engage at least 3,000 retailers in 90 *upazilas* of 20 southern U.S. Government’s Feed the Future (FTF) districts in Bangladesh. This network will provide better services to 1,000,000 farmers through the provision of quality inputs and embedded services. AIP advocates that improving the availability of agricultural inputs is vital to increasing smallholder farmers’ yields, incomes, and food security in southern Bangladesh.

To build public awareness of quality standards and inputs, AIP launched and will maintain a multi-media campaign for the next two years focusing around the theme “Did You Know?” or “*Apni Janen Ki?*” for improving knowledge and practices of agro-input retailers, farmers, and other relevant stakeholders. The campaign, detailed below, specifically focuses on generating greater recognition of quality in terms of Government of Bangladesh’s statutes and conventional wisdom by promoting messages in-sync with regional agricultural calendars.

Overall Objectives:

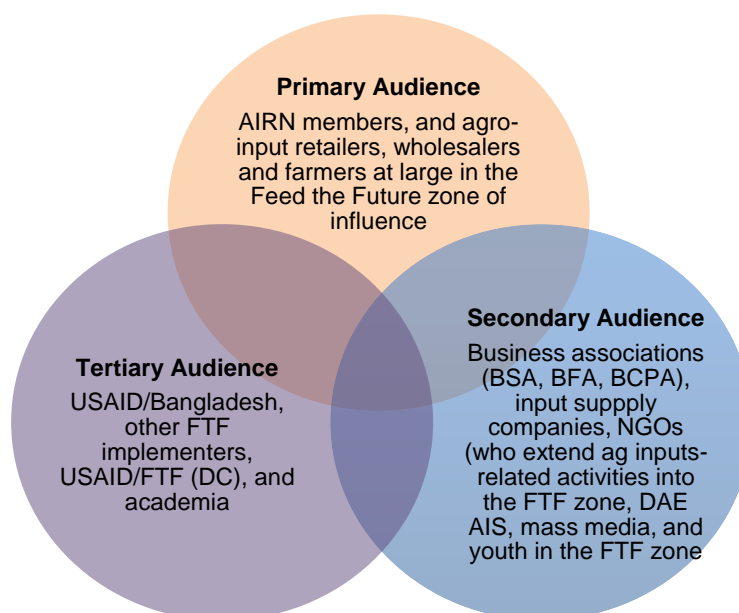
Through a multi-media and outreach approach, this campaign aims to:

- Create and maintain ability amongst AIRN member retailers and their client farmers to recognize, demand and understand the benefits of quality agro-inputs.
- Improve recognition and knowledge of:
 - a. Government of Bangladesh’s statutory parameters that govern quality along supply chains of seed, fertilizers, and CPPs;
 - b. Other science-based quality parameters; and
 - c. Conventional wisdom to guide buyers and sellers.
- Ensure that successes are promoted to USAID, general public (in-country and international), the media and other target audiences identified below.

Target Audiences:

These audiences are divided into three groups: primary, secondary and tertiary. However, there will often be overlap between the audiences depending on the tactics described below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Target Audiences of AIP Communications Media Campaign



Strategy One: Embrace and employ mass media to create and maintain awareness amongst retailers and their client farmers to recognize and demand quality agro-inputs.

Why mass media?

- Employing mass media can help AIP reach wider audiences in both rural and semi-urban areas. Currently, 46% of households own a television, with 76% ownership amongst urban dwellers and 32% amongst rural ones. According to a recent qualitative survey by Nielsen Bangladesh (2010) the reach of TV in rural areas is 62%; the viewership rate in Barisal division is (60%) and in Khulna 70%. Community radio and Bangladesh *betar* (GOB radio) audiences include rural farmers.
- Mass media is a well-accepted medium amongst target audiences and creates authenticity. Seeing-is-believing can help facilitate this.
- Currently, mass media plays a vital role in many successful development campaigns e.g., child immunization, family planning, reducing under 5 children mortality, girls' education

Tactics	Major messaging content	Audience	Medium	Timeline	Indicators
Tactic 1: Utilize press releases to inform media and ensure news coverage of AIP/AIRN events including agricultural trade fairs, workshops and industry events	Press releases will provide information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event (general) • Speakers (if confirmed) • Quotes (preapproved quotes if possible) 	<u>Directly:</u> Media houses, media representatives, media producers <u>Focus:</u> Farmers, retailers, mass People	Print and electronic media. All press releases will be uploaded to AIP's and CNFA's websites.	Year round	Press generated as a result of PR
Tactic 2: Create media kits that include Q&A (approved by AIP and USAID), AIP/AIRN fact sheets and pre-approved success stories	Q&A will provide approved messages on potentially controversial topics such as crop protection products and fertilizers. Other topics will be decided upon by with the help of the technical team.	<u>Directly:</u> Media <u>Focus:</u> farmers, retailers	Print	Year round	

Tactic 3: Facilitate 5 talk shows on 3 leading TV (i.e. BTV/Channel I/ ATN Bangla/ NTV/Jamuna TV) channels; 6 talk shows at community radio and 2 talk shows at GOB radio.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constraints and challenges of acquiring quality agro-inputs Role of AIRN Government policies 	Directly: TV and radio representatives Focus: Farmers, retailers, mass people	TV and Radio	Rolling	Number of media outlets (15+) and media coverage (50+) on events, successes or other issues of AIP and AIRN
Tactic 4: Jointly organize 3 round table discussion session with policy makers and key stakeholders with one Bangla (The Prothom Alo) /English (The Daily Star) newspaper for grabbing attention of key players	1. Quality agro-inputs, availability (year) – how to ensure quality inputs 2. CPP (safe use of pesticides) 3. Year Five: Results + sustainability of AIRN/ showcasing achievements	Directly: Bangla/ English newspaper management Focus: Policy makers, key stake holders, retailers, mass People	Newspaper	Rolling	
**TV/Radio Talk shows are popular among urban, educated dwellers in contemporary Bangladesh context. Similarly round table meetings jointly organized with newspapers can help grab attention of policymakers as it ensures the presence of policymakers, media and relevant stakeholders in the same meeting.					
Tactic 5: Produce three supplement (1/2 page) on the roundtable in Bangla/English newspaper	Major points of the participants during the round table discussion session	Directly: Bangla/ English newspaper management Focus: Policy makers, key stake holders, retailers, masses	Newspaper		April/ May 2015
Tactic 6: Produce 5 TV Public Service Announcements (PSAs/ads) facilitate their airing for at least 6 months on 1/2 TV channels	PSA One: Effective, supply chain of agricultural inputs – quality agricultural inputs in a cost-effective manner – AIRN focus – PSA Two: Customer service of AIRN PSA Three: Right dose, right time, right technology (proper dose at the right time) (fertilizer, CPP) PSA Four: Awareness of CPP, safety use PSA Five: Farmer using own seed vs. quality seed	Directly: TV Focus: Farmers, retailers, masses	TV	Rolling	
**PSA in TV/Radio: (As mentioned earlier) in rural Bangladesh people have significant access to national television channels (26 TV channels). Local dish cable channels (covering only local people with customized program) are also very popular in the rural community. Therefore, PSA on TV channels (including cable TV) can easily grab the attention of AIP target audiences. It provides a medium that those who are illiterate can benefit from. Additionally, broadcasting PSAs frequently also help rural farmers to memorize our messages and become more aware of quality agro-inputs.					

Strategy Two: Engage in a multi-year SMS campaign to reach rural target audiences with diverse messaging.

Why SMS?

- As of January 2014, [114,808 million people out of a 150 million population](#) are using a cell phone in Bangladesh.
- According BBS [Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010](#), this means that 66.74% people in the country are using cell phones while the percentage is 56.77 in rural areas and 82.78 in urban areas.
- SMS messaging has great potential to reach rural audiences that could otherwise not be reached with traditional media.

Tactics	Major messaging content	Audience	Medium	Timeline	Indicators
Tactic 1: SMS services via cell phones to promote key messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality agro inputs GOB policies AIRN 	Focus: Farmers, retailers	Cell phone	500,000 SMS in Y4; 3/4 times a months	SMS services via cell phones to farmers and retailers

Strategy Three: Produce videos to engage various audiences with quality information.

Videos have great potential to generate higher awareness amongst farmers and retailers. In collaboration, AIP will work with AIS to produce and disseminate videos amongst AIP's rural target populations.

Tactics	Major messaging content	Audience	Medium	Timeline	Indicators
Tactic 1: Produce two video documentaries (maximum 5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of AIRN Success of AIRN 	Focus: Farmers, retailers, general public, USAID	Mobile video projection unit	Rolling	Monitor viewership on YouTube
**Potential Support: Media Firm (video) and Agricultural Information Services (AIS) for mobile video projection at public places; video projection upazila level agricultural information center (GOB)					
Tactic 2: Produce training videos for farmers to help overcome illiteracy barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training video content will be guided at the discretion of the technical team. Examples could include short videos on distinguishing between good and bad seeds, the benefits of using CPPs and differences between crop yields of one that purchased quality agro-inputs and one that did not. 	Focus: Farmers, retailers,	Video	Rolling	Number of videos and number of farmers/retailers viewing

Strategy Four: Develop a comprehensive photo library to enhance the quality and aesthetics of promotional materials, e-booklets, fact sheets, videos and success stories.

Tactics	Major messaging content	Audience	Medium	Timeline	Indicators
Tactic 1: Identify photographers to routinely take photos to establish and maintain an AIP photo library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still images of products sold by an AIRN retailer such as seeds, fertilizer, CPPs AIRN members AIRN members and customers Farmers (AIRN customers) utilizing the products 	Focus: Primary, secondary and tertiary audiences	Various	Rolling	

Strategy Five: Utilize social media and AIP website to provide timely AIRN updates and engage target audiences to learn more about the quality of agro-inputs.

Why Facebook?

Nearly 14.4 million people of Bangladesh use Facebook, which is 41.6 percent of the internet users in Bangladesh. [Wikipedia] Most of them are youths. (<http://perspectivebd.com/2013/12/social-media-a-blessing-or-a-curse>).

Tactics	Major messaging content	Audience	Medium	Timeline	Indicators
Tactic 1: Promote quality agro-inputs issues via Facebook.	Links and brief information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIRN newsletter • Monthly Price Bulletin • News coverage • Relevant communications materials developed by AIP • News of AIRN • Success stories • Photos 	Focus: Youth, mass media, Business associations (BSA, BFA, BCPA) input supply companies, NGOs, Government of Bangladesh, all tertiary target audiences	Facebook. Cross-promote with CNFA's Facebook Page, USAID Bangladesh Facebook and FTF Facebook	Launch Facebook page in March 2015 and update at least twice a week	By end of project, Facebook page will have 3,000+ fans
Tactic 2: Promote quality agro-inputs issues through AIP website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIRN newsletter • Monthly Price Bulletin • News coverage • Relevant communications materials developed by AIP • Success stories • Links to TV programs • Photos 	Focus: Business associations (BSA, BFA, BCPA) input supply companies, NGOs, GOB, mass media, youth, USAID/Bangladesh, FTF implementers, and academia	AIP website	Year round	Unique visitors each quarter TBD

Strategy Six: Produce communication collateral materials that can educate and engage various target audiences.

Tactics	Major messaging content	Audience	Medium	Timeline	Indicators
Tactic 1: Produce 3 e-booklets/ brochures (electronic and print)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seed • Fertilizer • Crop Protection Products 	Focus: Farmers and retailers	Print materials	May 2015	# Number of retailers and farmers gaining access to e-booklets and brochures (printed version)
Tactic 2: Produce and disseminate AIRN quarterly newsletter and MPOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News related to AIP and AIRN • Monthly price of quality agro inputs 	Focus: Retailers. Farmers, USAID, policymakers	Print and digital	Rolling	# AIRN newsletter and monthly price bulletin
Tactic 3: Produce factsheets of AIP and AIRN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervention specific fact sheets (4) • Government promotion of women + policy brief • Women's access to finance • Nutrition/demo plots, basic trainings, nutritious crops, • Brief paper on GOB policies, rules and regulations on quality agro inputs 	Focus: All audiences	Print materials	Year round	

Strategy Seven: Utilize signage for key messages

Tactics	Major messaging content	Audience	Medium	Timeline	Indicators
Tactic 1: Produce 9 posters on quality agro-inputs and nutrition	Poster 1: Quality Seeds, how to recognize Poster 2: Quality fertilizer, how to	Focus: Farmers and retailers	Print materials Support: AIS and	May 2015	

	recognize Poster 3: CPP, safety measures (pictures) Poster 4: CPP, how to recognize Poster 5: How to report bad inputs/call center Poster 6: Nutritious crops Poster 7: Promote specific women-retailers Poster 8: Access to information/Market Information. How to get updated prices of agro-inputs 8 (aimed towards retailers) Poster 9: Environmental stewardship – How to use inputs in an environmentally friendly manner?		consultants		
Tactic 2: Produce and install billboards in the outskirt of Khulna, Jessore, Barisal, Jenaidha, Faridpur	Two Billboard Messages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join AIRN → improve your business Join AIRN → obtain quality inputs 	Focus: Farmers and retailers, mass people	Billboard	Rolling	Billboards installation (Khulna, Jessore, Barisal, Jhenaidaha, Faridpur)
Tactic 3: Develop small shop sign for every AIRN retailer to establish brand consistency	Sign will include shop name, owner's name, address and owner's phone number	Focus: Farmers	Small signage	Rolling	

Strategy Eight: Continually develop success stories to complement the on-going strategies listed above

Tactics	Major messaging content	Audience	Medium	Timeline	Indicators
Tactic 1: Develop success story calendar assigned accordingly to appropriate staff to track	Below are success story ideas that are in development.	Focus: All audiences with special emphasis on USAID Bangladesh	Include in press kits, newsletter, USAID Bangladesh media channels, CNFA promotion materials	Rolling	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration plots in the field- lots of plots on the land → how has yield increased? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show result of quality seed If the demonstration is successful, then the retailer's sale will increase Yield, availability of seed, minimizing yield gap with good quality inputs, good management practices MoUs with companies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration, training to retailers (cost-sharing basis), collecting data of demonstration plots and company retailers (GIS), supply assessment ***Company retailers (Syngenta/Bayer crop)- they are wholesalers. We are calling them retailers (wholesaling and retailing). Creating a strong bond (company, farmer, retailer)... supply chain. Sales increase as an AIRN member (beneficiary highlight) Women retailers Monthly Price Outlook Bulletin: distributing since October... issued 6. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AIP conducted a small survey, almost 50% they have managed to increase their business (product range) to getting information from bulletin and Increase their product range. AIRN. Explaining the uniqueness of the AIRN. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently there are 2000 AIRN members. What are the changes that happen after trainings? What are the immediate changes? Need to interview both retailer and farmer. Working with associations (fertilizer, crop protection products, and seed). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a stronger voice by working with associations. Explain country context and how this can influence policy change. Call Center. 					

Strategy Nine: Plan, host and attend events to help gain greater visibility for AIP/AIRN

Tactics	Major messaging content	Audience	Medium	Timeline	Indicators
Tactic 1: Facilitate short quiz sessions on quality agro-inputs during field demonstrations, farmers day and mass gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality agro-inputs-GoB statutory, conventional wisdom Quality issues related to seed, fertilizer and pesticides 	Focus: Retailers and farmers	Inter-personal communications (Quiz)		Year round
Tactic 2: Stage regional agricultural exhibitions to showcase innovative management techniques and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AIRN and key associations will take lead roles in facilitating exhibitions 	Farmers, retailers, equipment and finance companies, regional and national wholesalers, international input manufactures, agro-processors		December 2015, December 2016	

Assessment of the strategy and re-planning

Via regular assessments, AIP will review the impact of its communications strategy (mass media campaigning, SMS and other related communications materials). These communications channels will foster awareness on quality agro-inputs, improve advisory services and practice of using quality inputs respectively by retailers and farmers.

To create the strategy, AIP used secondary information *i.e.*, GOB data for selecting communications channels. As AIP anticipates that all the communications campaign elements will be launched by January 2016, AIP will carry forward a random sample survey in June 2016 to assess materials' effect through focus group discussion and key person's interviews. AIP will measure both quantity and quality issues *i.e.* number viewers of PSA/ TV ad, people receiving SMS, number of people observing billboards, posters, leaflets and their ability to repeat the key messages. Benefit, awareness, and practice of key messages will be measured during the assessment, and course corrections will be made as necessary. In addition, AIP has plan for pre-testing before finalizing 5 posters and 3 PSA/TV ads in order to improve/tailor the effectiveness of the messages to its target audience.

Annex 2: AIRN Code of Conduct

AIRN logo bearing business/enterprise must abide by the following Code of Conduct:

- Will never order or sell fake/adulterated/expired agro-inputs (intentionally);
- Will always sell quality and effective agro-inputs and provide sound technical services to the farmers;
- Will organize the input shelves following the WHO color code and will maintain inventory properly;
- Will sell PSEs for spraying pesticides.

Annex 3: Criteria for AIRN Champion Retailer

Champion AIRN members will follow these criteria:

1. Will have concrete shop floor (not to be loose dirt or holes) and well-ventilated room.
2. Inputs (seeds/pesticides/fertilizers) will be arranged and separated rack-wise (front rack-seeds & pesticides; opposite desk, fertilizer).
3. Will maintain WHO color coding (poisonous pesticides kept in high rack and others are in lower portion of the rack (red – extremely toxic pesticide, yellow – highly toxic, green – slightly toxic)).
4. PSEs will be kept in front of the shop to demonstrate and sell to farmers.
5. Fire extinguishers, sponges and sand in pots will be kept in specific location for safe and environmental protection of the shop.
6. Emergency phone numbers will be visibly displayed: agriculture office, fire brigade offices, hospital, AIRN Call Center hotline etc.
7. Records will be properly maintained through retailer's logbook and shared regularly with AIP M&E team (as well as sales information).
8. Will be ready to volunteer time to mentor others or to coordinate with other retailers
9. Shelves, desks, and floor of the shop will be kept neat and free of debris.
10. Will have overall good reputation in the community.

Annex 4: BFA/BCPA OCD Deliverable Descriptions and Schedule (Y3-Y4)

Task	Task delivery process	Deliverable description	Beginning date	End date	Remarks
Task 1: Kickoff orientation workshop	Association-wise: BFA and BCPA separately	A report describing OCD program orientations to BFA and BCPA secretariat staff and AIP	July 20, 2015	July 30, 2015	Deliverable submission by August 10, 2015
Task 2: Conduct two day training on USAID rules and regulations	Joint training with BFA and BCPA	Training report on USAID rules, participated by BCPA and BFA staff and members	Aug 10, 2015	Aug 25, 2015	Deliverable submission by August 30, 2015
Task 3: HR policy and procedure development	Association-wise: BFA and BCPA separately	A report combining HR policy document for BFA and BCPA	September 01, 2015	October 20, 2015	Deliverable submission by October 30, 2015
Task 4: Financial management and internal control systems development	Association-wise: BFA and BCPA separately	A separate report for BCPA and BFA on financial policy and computerized accounting systems development	October 10, 2015	December 30, 2015	Deliverable submission by January 15, 2016
Task-5: Business plan development of association, growth and sustainability	Association-wise: BFA and BCPA separately	Separate report for BCPA and BFA on business plan	January 15, 2016	March 25, 2016	Deliverable submission by April 10, 2016
Task 6: Membership service automation and website improvement	Association-wise: BFA and BCPA separately	Separate report for BCPA and BFA on website and membership database development	July 15, 2015	September 30, 2015	Deliverable submission by October 10, 2015
Task 7: USAID grant application training	Joint training with BFA and BCPA	Training report on USAID grant application training; participated by BCPA and BFA staff and members	April 03, 2016	April 28, 2016	Feb 26, 2016
Task 8: Monitoring and MIS development	Association-wise: BFA and BCPA separately	Separate report for BCPA and BFA monitoring and computerized MIS development	May 02, 2016	Jun 20, 2016	June 15, 2016

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